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SUBJECT: UNGA 59: SHUNNING SOUNDBITES, EU TARGETS PRACTICAL
PRIORITIES

REF: TRAUB FAX TO USUN AND IO/UNP OF 7/16/04

11. (U) SUMMARY: The EU's priorities paper for the UN (ref a) contains practical ideas to fix the UN system. Written in UN jargon, it is not intending to appeal to the general public, Karel van Kesteren, Director of UN affairs at the MFA, told Poloff on July 14. Five of the seven points (faxed to IO/UNP and USUN on July 16) cover UN reform: prep for the "2005 Major Plenary"; "UNGA Revitalization"; "Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN Development Activities"; "Capital Master Plan"; and, Reform of the Budgetary Process." Of the other two, Disarmament and Non-proliferation" is focuses on practical steps to enhance security. End Summary.

12. (C) Van Kesteren said the EU discarded their traditional catchall paper this year since in the past it had always turned out to be an over-long product of consensus drafting. The goals for this year's paper were succinctness and focus, following the U.S. and Chinese models, he said. He compared the EU's effort to list practical actions to the USG's promotion of legitimate, albeit more political, goals with catchy titles (ref b discusses his reaction to our UNGA priorities paper).

EU PRIORITIES

13. (SBU) 2005 Major Event - Staging a "Quantum Leap"

The UN needs to make a "quantum leap" to remain viable and relevant, van Kesteren asserted. The EU wants to lead efforts this year to prepare for next year's high level plenary to review the SYG's reform paper. Central to EU plans for UNGA 59 is a review of the progress made toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

14. (SBU) General Assembly Revitalization: "Cut all the junk" and Engage Ministers in Developing World Capitals

Van Kesteren used colorful language to describe the UN agenda and the EU's determination to purge "relics from the '60's" with "no relevance today even in the most strident of developing countries." Next year's plenary creates a good opening.

15. (SBU) Van Kesteren insisted that interested developed countries and groups must work harder in the capitals of developing countries, at the highest level, to bring about successful UNGA reform. He named Egypt, Nigeria, India, and Pakistan as countries in which appreciation for modern economic and governance policies by governments at home had not translated into more productive positions in New York. The various reasons -- communications, coordination, focus, incentive -- should be surmountable. He said the USG would have to help with the effort since we "have the diplomatic resources in the field" compared to the EU, which still depends on individual member states.

16. (SBU) Disarmament and non-proliferation

The EU aims to make the work of the First Committee more relevant. They will also look for opportunities to promote resolutions on WMD, although van Kesteren did not suggest the EU had a draft ready to share on any particular subject.

17. (SBU) Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN Development Activities and Operations

Van Kesteren pointed to this mouthful as "proof the EU is not trying to catch the eye" of the man or woman on the street with its paper. The goal of this item is to advance coordination, simplification and harmonization of the arcane range of UN development activities both in headquarters and especially in the field, to make donors' monies go further.

18. (SBU) Capital Master Plan - Special Terms through a Repayment Facility

The EU still hopes the USG will sweeten the financing of the CMP, acknowledging that the interest-free loan idea had

foundered on legitimate USG budgetary rules. Van Kesteren pitched an idea he said he had already shared with USUN, involving setting up a special repayment facility for the CMP loan.

19. (SBU) Member States would pay into the fund of the repayment facility according to the old UN scale of assessment without taking any special adjustments. Under this scheme, he figured the USG would pay about 31 percent, not too high considering the special responsibilities of the host country. He suggested the economic benefit of building in New York would offset this higher amount. He asked for the USG reaction to this idea.

110. (SBU) Reform of the Budgetary Process

The EU seeks to "build on Resolution 58/271, which aims to equip the UN better to meet the MDGs." A special focus would be on staff recruitment and deployment of posts.

111. (SBU) Security and Safety of the UN

The UN has learned that it is "not above the law of the jungle" as far as terrorism is concerned. Citing the attacks in Iraq, Van Kesteren said it is imperative that the UN Member States provide the means and foster the will inside the UN to protect UN personnel, both at Headquarters and in the field.

COMMENT

112. (SBU) The EU's short list of UNGA goals represents the nexus of EU consensus and realism as to what the Members believe they can reasonably achieve at UNGA 59. This represents the start of a two year process culminating in the UNGA 60 plenary dedicated to reform. The EU's new mantra, "Effective Multilateralism," is missing here, perhaps because the drafters wanted to avoid "sound bite drafting." It may still represent the unspoken aim of their chosen tasks for UNGA 59, even if their immediate concerns appear fairly down in the weeds.

RUSSEL